

The recent economic stimulus package directed support to our country's vast infrastructure needs. Maintenance and expansion projects funded through the stimulus package are currently underway creating jobs and boosting the economy. On April 13, 2009, President Obama announced that 2,000 transportation projects have begun construction in the 41 days since the transportation stimulus projects were announced.

While these projects work to stimulate the economy now, it is equally important that we implement a long-term transportation plan. The 111th Congress is tasked with reauthorizing the next transportation bill, and we must take this opportunity to ensure that the bill focuses on effectively moving goods through all modes of transportation – highways, railways, airways, waterways – to protect and create jobs, strengthen our economy, and improve our quality of life.

New Jersey's economy depends largely on our ability to effectively and efficiently move goods. More than 500,000, or approximately 1 in 8, jobs in the state are directly affected by the goods movement industry, which includes the shipping of everything from food and clothing to cars and industrial supplies. When products are able to move smoothly through various modes of transportation, the goods movement industry is capable of generating extensive economic development that supports increased business activity, jobs, income, and tax revenues. If the flow of goods moving through the state is impeded by unsuitable conditions and infrastructure, the New Jersey region may not be able to maintain its status as the premier east coast shipping location and preserve the economic opportunities that come with that status.

Addressing goods movement also has a direct benefit on our quality of life. More efficient goods movement enhances our ability to move on the roads, which means less time and gas spent commuting. It also means fewer harmful effects on our environment and less damage to our infrastructure. Additionally, the ability to efficiently move goods lowers the price of products, such as groceries and medicines, by decreasing the time and expense to ship them to local stores. With the proximity of the New York/New Jersey port, residents of New Jersey stand to benefit the most from efficient goods movement.

In order to reap these benefits, we must make infrastructure investments that facilitate the movement of goods. As a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in the 111th Congress, I will be working to enhance goods movement through an intermodal transportation plan that strengthens our economy, protects and increases jobs in our region, and improves our quality of life.

